

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

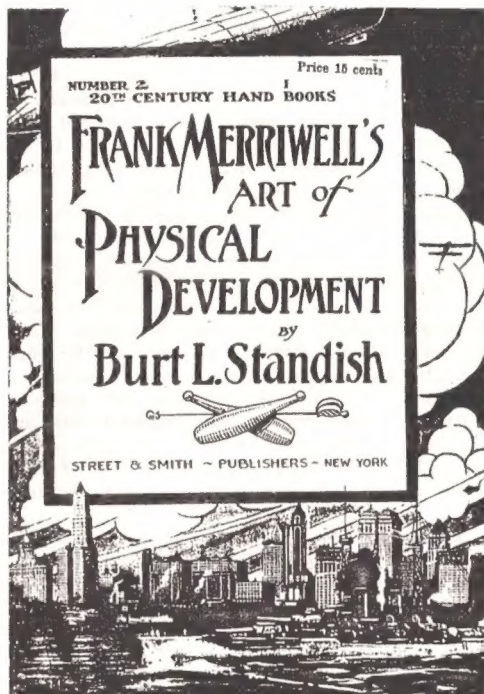
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## NICHOLAS CARTER, DETECTIVE?

By J. Randolph Cox



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20TH CENTURY HANDBOOKS

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## NICHOLAS CARTER, DETECTIVE?\*

By J. Randolph Cox

Somewhere in that vast encyclopaedia of dime novel lore growing from the files and notebooks in a basement workroom in Minnesota there is a nugget of information that reads:

CARTER, NICHOLAS. Detective-hero created by John Russell Coryell for Street & Smith's *New York Weekly* (1886). The account of his career was continued by Frederic Van Rensselaer Dey and others in stories published in the *Nick Carter Library* (1891-1895), *Nick Carter Weekly* (1896-1912), *Nick Carter Stories* (1912-1915), the *Magnet Detective Library* (1897-1907), *New Magnet Library* (1907-1933), *Detective Story Magazine* (1915-1927), and *Nick Carter Magazine* (1933-1936).

Detective-hero it reads. Since Nick Carter is a character in dime novels this implies the ability to solve mysteries, to put together the pieces of a puzzle, and the ability to restore order to the flow of events disrupted by a crime. The dime novel detective retains many of the characteristics of the frontier hero: a simple, uncomplicated outlook on life and the ability to track an ant across the Sahara desert. In common with other dime novel heroes, the dime novel detective may have a background that is shrouded in mystery and possesses the ability to strike fear into the hearts of the wicked, an uncanny skill with disguises, and a reputation for being second to none in his profession.

Nick Carter broke some of the traditions by which dime novel detectives could be recognized. For one thing, he was young. Unlike so many of his predecessors he did not appear on the scene suddenly and mysteriously. His own father, old Sim Carter (not "Seth Carter" as is so often erroneously stated), trained him in the detective art (as it was called) and when his mentor was murdered, Nick swore to avenge his death. In this he established a pattern for the "origin story" of the popular hero that has been repeated in the pulp magazines and comic books.

Having read far more Nick Carter stories over the past thirty years than anyone ought to have done (or as Bob Sampson has suggested, "than any decent person") I've been keeping track of many aspects of the stories and the characters. The continued identification of Nick Carter as a detective has prompted me to consider just what sort of detective methods he used.

Of course he made use of disguise thereby allowing him to shadow his suspects without them knowing he was there, but how did he decide who would be the prime suspects? As a contemporary of Sherlock Holmes, how much did he rely on the scientific art of deductive reasoning and how much was due to physical skill and luck. [The first Sherlock Holmes story was published in 1887, the last in 1927; these dates are nearly identical to the 1886-1927 dates that mark the nearly unbroken run of Nick Carter's appearances in the original Street & Smith publications. The character who appears in the pulp *Nick Carter Magazine* differs in enough ways from the dime novel and *Detective Story Magazine* character for him to be considered as standing outside the original series.]

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For this survey I have chosen, more or less at random, several episodes from the Nick Carter series to examine for their *detective story* content. I have chosen the first Nick Carter story of all, *THE OLD DETECTIVE'S PUPIL*, from 1886. Since it was conveniently available, I have included the six stories from the anthology *NICK CARTER, DETECTIVE*, collected by Robert Clurman (1963). This collection contains two stories by Frederick Van Rensselaer Dey (including his first from 1891), plus stories by O. P. Caylor, Frederick R. Burton, and George Waldo Browne.

To test the consistency of the detective methods employed I moved ahead in time about a decade and selected stories from the *Nick Carter Weekly*. The first was one of the stories rewritten from an original taken from the *Old Cap. Collier Library*; the next was Dey's first contribution following his great hiatus from the series; of course, a Dr. Quartz story was required to see how the Great New York Detective dealt with his greatest criminal adversary and this was chosen from the series published in 1905. The next story is one from 1910 (also by Dey), followed by a Fred Davis story of the next year, and Dey's final Nick Carter story of all (published in 1913). The last two stories are by George Jenks (1915) and Samuel Spalding (1918). The last one is also the last new title published in the *New Magnet Library*, no. 1025. Three decades of Nick Carter...

First let's return to the beginning of the series and the events which launched Nick Carter on his long career.

In *THE OLD DETECTIVE'S PUPIL*, Inspector Byrnes has sent Gerald Livingston to consult Sim Carter on a matter of Grave importance. The case results in the murder of the detective. His son, Nick Carter, calls on the Inspector:

"You were my father's friend," [said] Nick; "and I come to you for that, as well as because you are Police Inspector."

"Was his friend?" said the Inspector. "Am his friend."

"My father is dead."

"Dead?"

"He was murdered about an hour and a half ago."

"Murdered?"

The shocked Inspector rose from his chair.

"Murdered by whom?"

"You sent the Livingston case to father?"

"Yes."

"I took the case. I discovered facts of importance. The villains thought my father had the case, because I impersonated him. They killed him because they thought he knew too much."

"But how?"

"They had a shadow on me. I got father to go out about five o'clock this afternoon. I went soon after, and was gone about two hours.

"Father must have missed his shadow after a while and then gone home.

"The shadow followed father only a short distance and then left him, and was met by a big man, who went with him to our house.

"They got in and went up stairs to our rooms, where they picked the lock.

"The little man—the shadow—waited near the door, while the big man waited near the mantel-piece. The little man had a sand-bag, the big one a knife.

"When father came home he didn't go to the mantel for a match, as the men expected, but took one out of his pocket and struck it



before he was far into the room.

"Then the big man jumped at him and caught him by the throat to stop his cries.

"They wrestled for a moment, and then the little man hit him with the sand-bag; but it was dark, and the blow only partly stunned him, so the big man had to stab him to kill him.

"He fell on his face. The big man lighted the gas, and to make sure of his work hit father across the neck with the sand-bag."

The Inspector stared in horror as he listened to the son telling so minutely of his father's murder.

Nick's tone, too, though studiously cold, was yet so intense that it made his listener shudder.

"How did you discover this?" he asked.

"Marks on the front door and on the upper door told me the locks had been picked.

"There were marks on the wall near the door where the hat of the small man had rubbed.

"Some of the things on the mantel were disturbed just as they would be by the elbow of a rather large man leaning there.

"The clock, too, had been pushed at the time, and was stopped—it was a pendulum clock—at half past five.

"The little man struck him first with the sand-bag, for the blow was on the back part of the head, near the ear, and not on top as if wielded by a large man.

He must have been stabbed after he was stunned, for the blow was a steady one, and not at random as if during a struggle.

"The last blow on the neck was by the big man, for the little man would have struck on the back of the neck, whereas the blow was more on the side.

"The gas was not lighted by father, because he used a peculiar, noiseless, quick-lighting match. Such a one, put out immediately after it was lighted, lay under him.

"Another match, unlike any we used, lay, almost burned, upon the carpet where it had been thrown while still lighted.

"The little man could not have lighted the gas, for he was too short to reach it.

"The big man wore a rough, gray coat. He has a red mustache dyed black.

"I know this, because under father's finger nails are gray woolly hairs from the coat, and in one hand was a mustache hair, dyed black, the real color showing about the root.

"It had been pulled out in the first struggle."

The Inspector gazed at the young man in amazement.

"I have told you all this," Nick continued, before the Inspector could speak, "because I want you to see that I am competent to attend to the affair. My father devoted his life to making me a good detective. I want you to let me hunt down these men. Not only the ones who struck, but the ones who planned. Will you?"

(NML 954, pp. 52-54)

At first Inspector Byrnes is reluctant to give Nick Carter full control over the case, but the young man soon convinces the older one that he is the man for the job.

Five years later, Frederic Van Rensselaer Dey wrote the first of the hundreds of novelettes about Nick Carter for the newly established *Nick Carter Detective Library*.

At first there appears to be little deductive reasoning involved in the case called NICK CARTER, DETECTIVE (*NCL* 1, August 8, 1891), but there are many examples of the use of disguise, of the shadowing of suspects, the overhearing of plans being laid, and the fortunate timing of the detective to be in the right place at the right time, as well as some examples of Nick Carter's display of strength and wit. There is a slight similarity between the plot of this story and the Sherlock Holmes story, *THE SPECKLED BAND*, so that we might suspect some borrowing of ideas. Since the Nick Carter story was published first we might suspect Arthur Conan Doyle of having borrowed the plot for his story, but we have no evidence that Doyle ever read the *Nick Carter Library*. A closer look at the plot suggests the more likely probability that Dey borrowed some of its main features from Poe's *THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE*.

There is a scene in chapter 10 of NICK CARTER, DETECTIVE in which Nick is discovered in the act of some deductive reasoning.

The detective went at once to the cellar, and began an exhaustive search for the secret passage-way, but after an hour vainly spent, he again sought the stair-way which had puzzled him.

The greater discoveries are made by accident, and so it happened in this case.

He had arranged a box on which to stand while examining the underside of the stairs, but in putting it in place, he had not fixed it securely, and accordingly, just as he was becoming interested in his task, the box toppled from its place.

Nick lost his balance and would have fallen had he not thrown up his hands to save himself; as he did so, he grasped a two-by-four inch timber which looked as though it had been placed there for additional support to the stairs.

The timber was not stationary, however. It came loose in his hand, but with sufficient difficulty to save him from falling.

Leaping down, he rearranged the box and again mounted it.

The necessity for searching was, however, ended.

The removal of the stick of wood disclosed an ordinary staple and hook which fastened the movable stairs in place.

He removed the hook, and the stairs worked just as he had expected them to.

A person could go from the cellar to the parlor floor without having to pass through a door.

The discovery was one which filled Nick with pleasure, and there only remained now to find an equally easy way into the street.

(*NCL* 1, Clurman: Macmillan, pp. 41-42, Dell, pp. 49-50)

And, of course, Nick found that way in the course of the chapter.

In NICK CARTER'S CROOKED CORRESPONDENT; OR, THE COUNTERFEITER'S GOLD TOOTH, which appeared in *Nick Carter Library* no. 179 (January 5, 1895), written by George Waldo Browne, there is a remarkable example of timing on the part of the detective. Nick receives a telegram describing a known counterfeiter just as that man is being placed under arrest at the train station where Nick is waiting. As the police open a cigar box filled with counterfeit bills one of the policemen notices Nick and we hear this exchange:

"Hilloa, Nick! this you? How is it you are always on hand on occasions like this?"

"It is my business," was the quiet reply, as the great detective took the box." (Clurman: Macmillan, p. 69, Dell, p. 71)



Nick asks that the cigar box be photographed for fingerprints. This bit of scientific police work sends him on a search for a man with a Y-shaped scar on his middle finger and an encounter with the man's near double, minus the scar, but possessing a gold tooth.

Nick keeps his eyes open at all times, noting every unusual situation and item he passes. He is often aware of the identity of the person he is after from the outset, but he needs to find the evidence that will convict him. In NICK CARTER'S MYSTERIOUS CLIENT; OR, THE ROAD-HOUSE TRAGEDY, by Frederick Van Rensselaer Dey (NCL 29, February 20, 1892) Nick makes an exhaustive search of the scene of the crime and provides deductions based on his observation of a handful of horse hairs that would not have been out of place in the best of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. While the conclusion of the case comes quickly with the dime novel conventional sequence of capture, escape, and recapture, the story stands out as an excellent example of Nick Carter's use of deductive reasoning and contains a statement of his theories and methods of crime solving.

If I build a house, I first dig my cellar and then lay my foundation wall. If I write a letter, I have a pretty general idea of what I am going to say before I begin. If a crime is committed and I seek to find its perpetrator, I begin at the beginning.

To successfully work out the mysteries connected with a crime it is essential to begin where the criminal began, and to keep moving forward. The mistake that the average detective makes, is that he begins in the middle—that is, puts up his balloon-frame before he has begun his foundation, and the inevitable result is that the structure falls in ruins, leaving the builder worse off than he was before, simply because he is forced to clear away the debris before he can recommence his work.

(NCL 29; Clurman: Macmillan, p. 152-153, Dell, p. 140-141)

O. P. Caylor's NICK CARTER'S BEAUTIFUL DECOY; OR, THE DIAMOND DUKE OF CHICAGO, originally appeared as *Nick Carter Library* no. 137, March 17, 1894. It is an example of the case in which Nick knows all along who he is after, but some complications along the way makes things interesting for him. There is no real "detective work" here except for the use of disguises and the shadowing of suspects as Nick insinuates himself into the company of Yank Yardell and his gang while waiting for him to make a move and reveal the nature of his plans.

The final two stories in the collection were written by Frederick R. Burton. Neither NICK CARTER'S ENEMY; OR, BRINGING A MURDERER TO THE GALLOWS (NCW no. 275, April 5, 1902) nor NICK CARTER AND THE PROFESSOR; OR, SOLVING A SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM (NCW no. 277, April 19, 1902) stands out as an example of Nick Carter's use of deductive reasoning or observation, but each has passages of interest that should help us to see more clearly just what it is that Nick relies upon for his continued success as a detective. The first is the second part of a series in which Nick is in pursuit of the murderer, Lacrosse, a trail that takes him to Canada and a manhunt through the North Woods. How does Nick identify the man he is after? Simple intuition.

And yet Nick felt that strong feeling which often meant as much to him as plain evidence, that this man was the would-be murderer; in one word, Lacrosse.

(NCW no. 275; Clurman: Macmillan, p. 270, Dell, p. 240)

In the second story there are some remarks to explain why Nick believes Hawley's body has been destroyed, but there are also some examples

of Nick's philosophy as a detective when he says that "the plainest things are sometimes the slowest in coming to the mind" (Clurman: Macmillan, p. 332, Dell, p. 293) or this observation by someone who knows him.

"You must think I'm a lucky man, Jim."

"I do. Haven't you said yourself that your success has depended a great deal on good luck?"

"Yes, that's true."

"When you say it, Nick; the rest of us know that you succeed because of ability."

The detective smiled. (Clurman: Macmillan, p. 334, Dell, p. 296)

The next story examined was NICK CARTER AND THE PHANTOM OF POVERTY LANE; OR, A BUNDLE OF TANGLED CLEWS (NCW 343, July 25, 1903). The story had originally appeared in the *Old Cap. Collier Library*, but was rewritten for its present publication. This "second hand" Nick Carter story poses some interesting problems for this discussion since the story had to be worked into the common pattern of stories for the series. That this was not done to any extensive degree is obvious to a reader familiar with the usual Nick Carter "style." There is less ratiocinative analysis here and more of the Pinkerton method of shadowing a suspect, eavesdropping, and sheer dogged determination. The story is told from the points of view of the client, the suspects, and Nick Carter himself so there is no unified attempt to present the mystery in a manner that invites the reader to try to solve it. The best example of real police work comes when Nick goes to search the records in the Bureau of Vital Statistics to establish the relationships of some of the characters with each other as well as their identities. But even Nick proceeds on lines that are more procedural than intuitive.

It is true that the detective could have arrested them then and there, and started in to hunt for evidence afterward.

But Nick Carter did not do business in that way.

He concluded to let them go unmolested for a time.

By quietly following them up, in time he would be able to get at the bottom of the whole foul conspiracy. (NCW 343, p. 11)

There is, to be sure, the dime novel tradition that establishes the very name "Nick Carter" to be enough to make even the most hardened criminal quake in his boots.

In 1904, Frederic Van Rensselaer Dey returned to writing Nick Carter stories on a full time basis. We know too little about Dey's personal life to do more than hazard a guess about his reasons for relinquishing the series at one point and then picking it up again. Suffice it to say that most of the Nick Carter stories published in the *Nick Carter Weekly* after 1904 are his work.

In DAZAAR, THE ARCH FIEND; OR, THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN DEVILS (NCW 372, February 13, 1904) a man who calls himself "Mr. Thompson" tells Nick about a master villain whose avocation is to cause suffering and makes an appointment with Nick at his home to tell him more. As the carriage pulls up to Nick's door, "Thompson" is discovered inside, quite dead.

There is much questioning of the cab driver and Nick hires the driver to learn who drove the other cab that passed this one, the one that contained "Thompson's" killer. Aided by Patsy and Ten-Ichi, a newly hired Japanese servant who wishes to learn to be a detective, Nick accepts the challenge sent him by the villain known only as Dazaar. He also agrees to find the missing wife of Don Murillo Cortez. There is a sort of deductive reasoning that allows Nick to match the actions of Cortez to the



statements of intent made by the writer of the letter signed "Dazaar." Eliciting information by indirect questions, Nick discovers a relationship between the two cases. Otherwise the story is filled with the usual hair-breadth escapes from danger including an episode in which Patsy is to be sacrificed to the device known as the Maiden of Steel (a far more gruesome torture than the more familiar Iron Maiden). And here it is Ten-Ichi to the rescue!

There is little detective work, but much chase and capture, escape and recapture, in DR. QUARTZ'S LAST PLAY; OR, A HAND WITH A ROYAL FLUSH (NCW 420, January 14, 1905). Much of the action involves Nick's capture by Quartz and Zanoni and the attempts of his assistants to learn where he has been taken. In this last, Chick is able to "read" the clues left in the dust of Nick's barn-prison to discover that Nick has been dragged away, that the locket chain he left behind was not broken but unclasped, to signify that he meant it to be an indication that he was not expecting any immediate harm.

The most clever piece of deductive reasoning concerns the letters "p" and "f" found written in the dust. Clearly meant as part of a word, he clue sends Chick and Patsy to searching the dictionary for a word that contains both letters. They find the word "pacific" and then remember Quartz's past boast that he had a hideout on a Pacific island where he hoped one day to retire to a life spent (or misspent) in vivisection.

Dey's work is evident in THE STOCKBRIDGE AFFAIR; OR, NICK CARTER'S QUICK DETECTIVE WORK (NCW 710, August 6, 1910) in which we watch Nick unravel the mystery of the murder of Gordon Crandyl, observe how he can open a safe without knowing the combination, and discover three piles of bound volumes of the *New York Clarion*. By the dust marks on the volumes he can tell which one has been examined and replaced in the pile. On opening the volume he finds that one of the columns has been cut out of the issue for June 23, 1880. When Nick finds the article in the file copies in the offices of the newspaper itself we, the readers, are not told what the article contains, only that "a great light broke upon the detective." (p. 14)

The method by which Nick discovers how access to the office was gained by an examination of the paper on the ceiling and the design which conceals the trapdoor behind it is as good as the scene in which he discovered the secret entrance to the cellar back in the first issue of the *Nick Carter Detective Library* of 1891. We are never able to examine the sequence of Nick's reasoning, however, only the results of his deductions.

In THE POISONS OF EXILI; OR, NICK CARTER ON DEATH'S TRAIL (NCW 758, July 8, 1911), by Frederick W. Davis, we observe the sharp eye of Nick Carter at work and see him respond to one of his famous hunches ["The word hunch, as he applied it and coming from one of his exceedingly sensitive mental poise and vocation, was nearly synonymous with intuition." (p. 1)] as he spots a wooden box on an express wagon passing on 42nd Street. The cover has been screwed down, not fastened with nails, and the whole box is faded and defaced as though it had been in the ground serving as a case for a coffin. On closer scrutiny it seems to contain a wax dummy (or "lay figure" as it is termed in the story) used in a store window display, but Nick realizes that the eyes in the figure are closed, the nostrils have fine hairs, and the hair on the head of the figure is a natural growth. In a word, it is a girl, in a hypnotic trance, her face coated with transparent wax.

The trail Nick follows leads to a criminal from a past century, a man named Exili, who "knew the art of making the most subtle and deadly poisons." (p. 27) Exili shared his secrets with one Goden St. Croix (a



resident of the Bastille) and those secrets have now fallen into criminal hands in the 20th century.

Frederick Dey's final Nick Carter story was THE SPIDER'S PARLOR; OR, NICK CARTER'S ENTRANGLING NET (NCS 21, February 1, 1913), the last of a three story sequence. In part one (THE CORRIGAN INHERITANCE, NCS 19) Nick's knowledge of criminal methods helps him explain how a satchel of money has been switched for one containing packets of yellow and white slips of paper. In NCS 21 Patsy uses a convention of the Pinkerton agency stories; he poses as a crook to get himself jailed in order to get into Gypsy Madge's gang and meet the notorious thief known as The Spider.

George C. Jenks's THE CLEW OF THE WHITE COLLAR; OR, NICK CARTER ON A TWISTED TRAIL, (NCS 144, June 12, 1915) contains a real detective convention of the cliché kind, in which an oily fingerprint on the collar of Paul Clayton proves to belong to John Garrison Rayne, a crook thought to be in jail in Puerto Rico.

WILDFIRE (*New Magnet Library* 1025, April, 1920) is a story of crooked work at the race track and the attempt of a gang of master crooks to fix the Harkness Cup. The story has a curious bibliographic history, having appeared originally as a Sexton Blake story by Norman Goddard in *Union Jack* for 1912 under the title THE GREAT TURF MYSTERY. In 1918 it appeared as a serial signed "Douglas Grey" in the pages of Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine* where the detective was not Sexton Blake nor Nick Carter but Thorndyke Flint. The author of the revised version was Samuel C. Spaulding who worked under contract to Street & Smith converting British detective stories into Nick Carter ones. As an entry in the *New Magnet Library* it has the distinction of being the last new title to appear in that publication. All titles from 1026 to 1369 were reprints of ear-numbers of the *NML*.

There is no doubt who the villains are in the story as Nick's detective work involves shadowing and an elaborate stake-out while in disguise as an artist. His foe, one "Sharp" Blade, is likewise disguised and the two confront each other in an imaginative, if unlikely, battle of deception. Alas, Blade's confederates capture the great detective and prepare to murder him.

With the aid of Prince, the German Shepherd, it is Patsy who reads the trail of clues to learn what has happened to his chief.

"A page from the chief's sketchbook!" thought Patsy, stopping to take it from the dog's mouth. Then, turning on his flash light, he swept the ground with its beams, taking care to place himself between the house and the light.

"There was some sort of struggle here," was his decision. "No doubt about that. The chief was attacked—and right out in the open, too—almost in the road. That suggests that it took place after dark, but he wouldn't have been using his sketchbook then—he would have had it packed up with the rest of his kit. And it isn't at all likely that he was still hanging around the house at this distance so many hours after he had started out. No, it must have been in daylight; probably not so very long after he had left home. And he was taken by surprise; that's plain. But there isn't a sign of blood here, Prince. They knocked him on the head from behind, I imagine. All right; so far, so bad. Now, old fellow, see if you can tell me what they did with him."

Instantly the dog doubled on his tracks, crossing the road once more. At the other side of it there was a ditch with a trickle of water at the bottom. On the damp bank several footsteps showed

distinctly.

"Three sets of them," Patsy said to himself, stooping to examine them, "but none of them is the chief's. Well, there's no time to study them now. I'll just take a snapshot of them."

He took out a pocket camera and adjusted it deftly and speedily. When it was ready, he did something to his pocket lamp so that it shone upon a larger area and had a much greater intensity of light. Thanks to this more powerful illumination, which was kept on for a few moments, the footsteps were brought out clearly. The camera clicked and was followed by another click of the flash light; then darkness closed down on the scene.

The dog had been waiting impatiently. Now, at a word of encouragement, he darted ahead and entered Riley's grounds. He was headed for the lower entrance of the mushroom tunnel. But presently, when about two-thirds of the way to the sunken garden, he halted and whined inquiringly. Patsy's light flashed again just for a moment, but there was no evidence of commotion there.

"What's the matter, old boy?" young Garvan whispered. "You have been doing fine. They must have been carrying the chief, but you have kept the scent, probably because his coat or something else of his was dragging on the ground. That's going some, old chap. But how about it now? He didn't go up in an aeroplane here, did he?"

For answer, the dog apparently made up his mind what to do, and turned his back on the sunken garden and the more distant house. In fact, he struck back toward the road, not doubling on his tracks this time, but at a sharp angle. Patsy guessed in a moment what had happened. A less intelligent or a poorly trained animal would have wasted a lot of time in following the original trail to its destination—the secret tunnel, in this case. Then, after that had been explored, if possible, and a blank had been drawn by the impatient young detective, the trail away from the place of concealment would have been followed to the road. But Prince was made of different stuff.

As it happened, the men had followed the same path—for some little distance at any rate—in leaving the mushroom tunnel, that they had taken in approaching it; therefore, without going near the entrance of the tunnel, the dog had discovered where their returning footsteps had turned aside from the first route. Instead of following it any further, he had chosen to confine his attention to the more recent and fresher scent. (NML 1025, pp. 90-91)

If the image of the detective most often is that of a bloodhound, it is altogether fitting that Patsy uses the dog, Prince, to track the detective. In the end it is Nick's incredible stamina that wins the day for him (as usual) and not a reliance on the subtleties of deductive reasoning.

So, what does this all mean? It would appear that in spite of the many images of Nick Carter escaping the clutches of Master Crooks by means of his magnificent strength, of Nick Carter in one impenetrable disguise after the other, of Nick Carter winning the day by pluck and luck in true dime novel tradition, there is a solid body of evidence from the chronicles themselves that catch him in the act of performing feats of deductive reasoning and demonstrating the science of deduction in a manner not unworthy of the great Sherlock Holmes himself. The evidence is clear. The title of this paper was framed in the form of a question: Nicholas Carter, Detective? The answer is clearly: Nicholas Carter, Detective!



## BIBLIOGRAPHIC RAMBLES NO. 10: CAPT. MAYNE REID

By Peter C. Walther

Have you ever hunted bear? For those inured to the outdoor fastness possibly you have; for those of us intimidated by the likes of butterflies and flamingoes the hunting of bear assumes impossible not to mention life threatening proportions. But not to worry: authors have treated this subject time and again; it allows for those such as I the vicarious pleasure of slaying the fearsome quadruped safe within the confines of my easy chair with a cup of coffee or whatever liquid refreshment you prefer never very far away.

Some examples known to me can be cited: the subject of bear hunting is treated by Fred Whishaw in his *BORIS, THE BEAR HUNTER*, as well as Anne Bowman's *THE BEAR HUNTERS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS*. There are many others I'm sure, and Bruin himself is never far distant in the tried and true plots of Horatio Alger, Edward Stratemeyer, and Oliver Optic, just to name three. The specific book through which I would like to treat for just a moment is Capt. Mayne Reid's *BRUIN: THE GRAND BEAR HUNT*.

The premise of the story can be stated briefly: Alexis and Ivan are the two young sons of the Baron Grodonoff, himself a bear fancier. "A bear of every known variety was to be killed and skinned,—killed, too, in its own haunts and by their own hands; which, of course, meant that they were to visit every country where bears are to be found, and obtain a skin of each kind." (p. 19). The specific conditions to be met were outlined by Grodonoff père in a letter to the boys quoted in full on pp. 15 and 16:

"MY SONS ALEXIS AND IVAN: You have expressed a desire to travel, and have requested me to give you my permission. I accede to your request, but only upon the following conditions: You must procure for me a skin of every variety of bear known upon the earth. I do not mean such varieties as are termed 'accidental,' arising from albinism or like circumstances, but every species or variety known to naturalists and acknowledged as 'permanent.' The bears from which these skins are to be taken must be killed in their native haunts, and by your own hands,—with no other assistance than that of an attendant whom I shall appoint to accompany you. In order to accomplish the task which I have imposed upon you, it will be necessary for you to go 'round the world;' but I add the further condition, that you are to go *only once round it*. In *latitude*, I leave you free to range,—from pole to pole, if it so please you [this was a stretch of liberty at which both boys laughed]; but *longitudinally*, no. You must not cross the same meridian twice before returning to St. Petersburg. I do not intend this condition to apply to such traverses as you may be compelled to make, while actually engaged in the chase of a bear, or in tracking the animal to his den; only when you are *en route* upon your journey. You will take your departure from St. Petersburg, and go east or west, which you please. From the conditions I have imposed upon you, I hope you will have skill enough to discover that a route is traced out for you, and that, on starting you *can* follow it either eastward or westward. This, with all matters relating to your means and mode of travelling, I leave to your own choice; and I trust that the practical education you have received will enable you to make your tour with proper judgment. ['Tour, indeed!' exclaimed Ivan.] Once out of my palace, I take no further charge of you. You may be some years older before I see you again; but I trust the time will not be misspent; and that upon your return you may be able to give a proper account of yourselves is the earnest hope and wish

of your affectionate father,

MICHAEL GRODONOFF."

In company with Pouchskin, the old family retainer who has the sagacity, acumen and strength of a Superman, Sherlock Holmes, and Chingachgook, all rolled into one, the boys take leave of their father to fulfill their unique quest.

The results of their year-long hunt for all known species of bear are briefly tabulated below:

1. NORWAY (Lapland): brown bear (*ursus arctos*) and black bear (*ursus niger*); pp. 33-101
2. SPAIN (the Pyrenees): Spanish bear (*ursus pyrenaicus*); pp. 102-156
3. SOUTH AMERICA (Ecuador): spectacled bear and another species of black bear (*ursus frugilegus*); pp. 157-204
4. U.S.A. (Louisiana): American black bear (*ursus americanus*); pp. 205-235
5. MANITOBA (Hudson's Bay): polar bear (*ursus maritimus*); pp. 236-255
6. CANADA (Northwest Territory): Barren-Ground bear (*ursus richardsonii*); pp. 256-267
7. YUKON TERRITORY: grisley bear (*ursus ferox*); pp. 268-285
8. KAMCHATKA: Siberian bear (*ursus collaris*); pp. 286-307
9. BORNEO: Bornean bear (*ursus eurypilus*) and Malayan bear (*ursus malayanus*); pp. 308-331
10. INDIA: sloth bear (*ursus labiatus*); pp. 332-344
11. NEPAL: Thibet bear (*ursus thibetanus*); pp. 345-346
12. INDIA: an extra species (see below) and Isabella or snow bear (*ursus isabellinus*); pp. 346-362
13. LEBANON: Syrian bear (*ursus syriacus*); pp. 363-370

And thence home. You will not help but notice the law of diminishing literary returns, or should we accuse Reid of sloppy work habits? A brief paginal comparison will demonstrate the amazing fact that bears west of South America become quite unexplainably less ferocious and more amenable to captivity or death. Those desirous of hunting bear should take note.

BRUIN was my introduction to the works of Mayne Reid, and possible because I first read it some twenty years ago it holds a special place for me within the field of English Boys Books. Admittedly I read it a total of three times, the third to prepare myself for this little article, but a forth reading does not at this time constitute a serious threat to the realm of possibility. In fact I have put Mayne Reid to rest for some years to come in order to explore other distant corners of our literary firmament. BRUIN is a charming work and I commend it to your attention; there are many noteworthy adventures to be met with and lots of interesting natural history thrown in for good measure but space forbids any more than a cursory examination. In my 1865 Ticknor and Fields edition an Author's Note appears on the copyright page: "CAPTAIN REID acknowledges with pleasure the assistance of an American Author, the results of whose labors he has been kindly enabled to incorporate with his own in the story of BRUIN: OR, THE GRAND BEAR HUNT." Maybe Prof. Stele has identified this author in her Mayne Reid bio-bibliography published by Twayne; if so, then someone can write a postscript to this work on BRUIN. If not, the offer stands.

In India the Grodonoff boys with the ever-present Pouchskin killed a species of bear then unknown to naturalists (pp. 346-355) and the author simply refers to it as an extra species. Would it be fatuous of me, in light of the many happy hours BRUIN has provided me over the years and in honor of the subject of this article to name it "*ursus Reidius*?"



## CONCERNING THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE

By Jack T. Dizer

I once heard it said that only Bob Chenu and Jack Dizer believe in the Land of Oz, the Universal Brotherhood of Man, and THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE. Well, you might as well believe in something and what better than THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE.

The evidence for THE YOUNG BUILDERS is not as mystical as some think. Incomplete and unproven, yes, but with a tentative existence.

Both Bob and I have had books which advertise THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE. My Chatterton-Peck copy of THE QUEST OF THE SILVER SWAN, by W. Bert Foster, has a boxed listing of "Good Books For Boys" on the title page verso. Heading the list is THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE, by Allen Chapman, cloth, price: 60¢. Below the box is "Copyright, 1907, by Chatterton-Peck Company. The other six titles are: ANDY THE ACROBAT, by Peter T. Harkness; CANOE BOYS AND CAMP FIRES, by William Murray Graydon; FROM OFFICE BOY TO REPORTER, by Howard R. Garis; WITH AXE AND FLINTLOCK, by George Waldo Browne; and THE CRIMSON BANNER, by William D. Moffat.

Bob's collection has a copy of ANDY THE ACROBAT which again has THE YOUNG BUILDERS as the first book on the boxed list. The price has gone up to 75¢. Two titles have been added, TWO BOYS AND A FORTUNE, by Matthew White, Jr., and AN OKLAHOMA BOY, by Brant Collier. The copyright date is also 1907, and the company is again Chatterton-Peck. Neither of us had 1907 Chatterton-Peck editions of the other titles. We knew that most, at least, of the titles had been printed by various publishers and did not advertise YOUNG BUILDERS. Neither of us had the initiative to pursue the matter. Perhaps we didn't want our faith shaken!

Some years later Joe Slavin asked about THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE, and I sent him Xeroxes of Bob's book and my book. With commendable celerity he visited the Library of Congress where he has a stack pass, to check the remaining seven titles. He found copies of THE CRIMSON BANNER, CANOE BOYS AND CAMP FIRES, and TWO BOYS AND A FORTUNE. Joe could not find the Browne, Collier, or Chapman books, and noted that "The Library's Howard Garis had no such list..." He didn't say which of the many editions of the Garis title he observed. The three books observed all had the boxed list of Best Books For Boys, and all listed THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE at the top of the list. All were copyrighted 1907, and printed by Chatterton-Peck. At this point we have cited four of the seven titles advertised in my book, and five of the nine titles advertised in Bob's book. Note the copies reproduced as part of this article.

I do not have any edition of the Browne and Collier books, and lacking both the books and a consuming interest in finding them, have no more evidence that they were published by Chatterton-Peck than was THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE. We do know that five books have been seen advertising THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFDALE. The ads are all from Chatterton-Peck, and the books were all copyrighted in 1907. We know the ads are specific as to author, binding and price. We know that the price of the advertised books varied from 60¢ to \$1.00, and that THE YOUNG BUILDERS was listed at 60¢ in two books, and 75¢ in three books. If this is a phantom book it does seem unusual to change the price in various ads.

Chatterton-Peck books did not have the long printing runs of Grosset and Dunlap. If you question this, try looking for BOBBSEY TWINS in a Chatterton-Peck edition, to say nothing of the titles we have been discussing. It is known that Stratmeyer in late 1907 started negotiating with Grosset and Dunlap to transfer his more popular series to them in order to get into a bigger market. However, even after the Stratmeyer

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## BEST BOOKS FOR BOYS

- The Young Builders of Swiftsdale. By Allen Chapman. Cloth. Price, 75 cents.  
Andy the Acrobat. By Peter T. Harkness. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 75 cents.  
Canoe Boys and Camp Fire. By William Murray Graydon. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
From Office Boy to Reporter. By Howard R. Garis. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
With Axe and Flintlock. By George Waldo Brown. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
The Quest of the Silver Swan. By W. Bert Foster. Cloth. Price, 75 cents.  
The Crimson Banner. By William D. Moffat. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
Two Boys and a Fortune. By Matthew White, Jr. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 75 cents.  
An Oklahoma Boy. By Brant Collier. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 75 cents.

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CHATTERTON-POCK COMPANY  
CANOE BOYS AND CAMP FIRES

## GOOD BOOKS FOR BOYS

- The Young Builders of Swiftsdale. By Allen Chapman. Cloth. Price, 60 cents.  
Andy the Acrobat. By Peter T. Harkness. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 60 cents.  
Canoe Boys and Camp Fire. By William Murray Graydon. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
From Office Boy to Reporter. By Howard R. Garis. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
With Axe and Flintlock. By George Waldo Brown. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
The Crimson Banner. By William D. Moffat. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
The Quest of the Silver Swan. By W. Bert Foster. Cloth. Price, 75 cents.  
Copyright, by Frank A. Munsey Co., 1891 and 1895, as a serial.

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## THE QUEST OF THE SILVER SWAN.

## GOOD BOOKS FOR BOYS.

- The Young Builders of Swiftsdale. By Allen Chapman. Cloth. Price, 60 cents.  
Andy the Acrobat. By Peter T. Harkness. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 60 cents.  
Canoe Boys and Camp Fire. By William Murray Graydon. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
From Office Boy to Reporter. By Howard R. Garis. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
With Axe and Flintlock. By George Waldo Brown. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
The Quest of the Silver Swan. By W. Bert Foster. Cloth. Price, 75 cents.  
The Crimson Banner. By William D. Moffat. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.

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## TWO BOYS AND A FORTUNE

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## BEST BOOKS FOR BOYS

- The Young Builders of Swiftsdale. By Allen Chapman. Cloth. Price, 75 cents.  
Andy the Acrobat. By Peter T. Harkness. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 75 cents.  
Canoe Boys and Camp Fire. By William Murray Graydon. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
From Office Boy to Reporter. By Howard R. Garis. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
With Axe and Flintlock. By George Waldo Brown. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.  
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Two Boys and a Fortune. By Matthew White, Jr. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 75 cents.  
An Oklahoma Boy. By Brant Collier. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 75 cents.

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## ANDY THE ACROBAT.



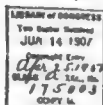
## GOOD BOOKS FOR BOYS

- The Young Builders of Swiftdale. By Allen Chapman. Cloth. Price, 60 cents.
- Andy the Acrobat. By Peter T. Hartness. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, 60 cents.
- The Queen of the Silver Swan. By W. Bert Foster. Cloth. Price, 75 cents.
- Canoes Boys and Camp Fire. By William Murray Graydon. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.
- From Office Boy to Reporter. By Howard R. Garis. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.
- With Axe and Flintlock. By George Waldo Browne. Cloth. Illustrated. Price, \$1.00.
- The Crimson Banner. By William D. Moffat. Cloth. Price, \$1.00.

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THE CRIMSON BANNER.



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move to Grosset and Dunlap, Chatterton-Peck continued to print Stratemeyer-controlled titles. (THE BOYS OF SPRING HILL is an example.) In fact most of the Stratemeyer-controlled single titles which were published by Burt around 1910 one came by way of Chatterton-Peck.

Still thinking of the Chatterton-Peck-Stratemeyer lawsuit which was settled in March, 1908, and might have affected the Chatterton-Peck publication of THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFTDALE, I notice that the three Library of Congress copies available all have copyright entries of April 25, 1907, and deposit dates of June 14, July 9, and July 15, 1907. The Stratemeyer suit came some months later. Can we believe that all nine titles had a copyright entry date of April 25, 1907, but that certain copies were never received at the Library of Congress and/or never printed? We know that for absolute accuracy in such transcendently important points as the existence of THE YOUNG BUILDERS OF SWIFTDALE we cannot trust the Library of Congress, but at my age I never trust anyone in government anyway!

So, who knows? All I can do is to remind you that there was also doubt about the existence of the Land of Oz until Philip Jose Farmer proved its existence in A BARNSTORMER IN OZ. And we still need more proof on the Universal Brotherhood of Man!

\* \* \* \* \*

Rick Crandall, 5093 Paradise Dr., Tiburon, CA 94920, says the 33rd Annual GRAND NATIONAL RODEO—HORSE SHOW—LIVESTOCK EXPOSITION, held at the Cow Palace, San Francisco, Oct. 28—Nov. 1977, was illustrated on the cover with *Tip Top Weekly* #457. Anyone wanting a copy should send him \$4 for a copy. We thank Mr. Crandall for bringing this item to light.

## AN ALGER MISATtribution

By Victor A. Berch

To a bibliographer, few things are more rewarding than being able to add a new citation to an author's bibliographic record. Equally rewarding and just as important is being able to uncover an incorrect attribution in an author's bibliographic record. And thus it is with one of the bibliographic citations in the Horatio Alger, Jr., bibliography of short stories.

The item to which I refer is the short sketch "The Little Outcast," which was first cited as an Alger piece by Ralph D. Gardner in his book *HORATIO ALGER; OR, THE AMERICAN HERO ERA*<sup>1</sup>. It was again cited by Gilbert K. Westgard II and Bob Bennett in their article "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Horatio Alger's Shorts, etc."<sup>2</sup>. And it was finally incorporated into Bob Bennett's *HORATIO ALGER, JR.: A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY*<sup>3</sup>.

In the course of updating the Alger short story bibliography compiled by Edward T. LeBlanc and me<sup>4</sup>, I began the task of re-examining each of the short stories cited in the above three bibliographies<sup>5</sup>. And so I came upon "The Little Outcast" which had appeared in *Gleason's Literary Companion*<sup>6</sup>.

What Mr. Gardner did not disclose in his bibliographic listing was the fact that this story was published in *Gleason's Literary Companion* as an anonymous story. Nor was there any indication as to the origin of this sketch. On what basis Mr. Gardner assigned this story to Horatio Alger, Jr., is puzzling, but I did make a note that the bibliography should so indicate that this was an anonymously written work. After all, Alger did write some works that were published anonymously and, for all I knew, perhaps Mr. Gardner had evidence that this sketch had indeed been composed by Alger.

I have a habit of working in related areas simultaneously, and while laboring away on the Alger bibliography, I was also examining the newspaper sketches of one of Alger's contemporaries, the ever prolific Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. Some of Cobb's early literary endeavors began to appear in the Universalist paper, *The Christian Freeman and Family Visitor*, of which Cobb's father, the Rev. Sylvanus Cobb, was the editor. This paper usually had one page devoted to literary matters, some of which were borrowed from other literary papers and periodicals of the day.

As luck or fate would have it, the very day that I examined the short sketch "The Little Outcast," I came upon that very same sketch in *The Christian Freeman and Family Visitor*<sup>7</sup>, only this time it carried a by-line. That by-line read *Mrs. Denison*, and there was the indication that this sketch had been borrowed from the *Olive Branch*, another Boston literary paper.

It took but little time to track down this sketch in the *Olive Branch*. I soon discovered it appeared in the November 6, 1852, issue, and was part of that paper's "Ladies' Department." The sketch was signed M.A.D., representing the initials of Mrs. Mary Ann Denison, the editor of the "Ladies' Department," and assistant editor of the *Olive Branch*. It is now evident that Algerphiles may remove this short sketch from their Alger files.

In closing, I would again like to express my appreciation to the staff of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts, and especially to Mr. Dennis R. Laurie who never wavered at my many requests for myriads of newspapers.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Gardner, Ralph D. HORATIO ALGER; OR, THE AMERICAN HERO ERA. Mendota, IL, Wayside Press, 1964, p. 493, under the listing of short stories in *Gleason's Literary Companion*.
- <sup>2</sup>Westgard II, Gilbert K., and Bob Bennett. "Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Alger's Shorts But Didn't Know Where To Look Or Who To Ask" *Newsboy*, 13, 5 (December, 1974), p. [8].
- <sup>3</sup>Bennett, Bob. HORATIO ALGER, JR.: A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY. Mt. Pleasant, MI, Flying Eagle Publishing Co., 1980, under the short story section, item no. 119, p. 182.
- <sup>4</sup>THE SHORT STORIES, ARTICLES AND POEMS OF HORATIO ALGER, JR., FROM PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED SOURCES AND ORIGINAL RESEARCH.
- <sup>5</sup>The motivation to re-examine the short stories is to accumulate as many of the opening lines to each story as is feasible. The rationale behind this is that many of the Alger short stories were reprinted anonymously or with variant titles in other newspapers throughout the United States. It would be useful to have a handy reference to each story for comparison and verification.
- <sup>6</sup>*Gleason's Literary Companion*, January 19, 1861.
- <sup>7</sup>*The Christian Freeman And Family Visiter*, April 29, 1853. A short while later, I also found another printing in the *Practical Christian*, March 12, 1853. This was likewise signed Mrs. Denison and carried the notice that it had been taken from the *Olive Branch*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LETTERS

I may be able to provide some further information relating to Peter C. Walther's article on "Edna Winfield." It seems most coincidental that only recently I should have discussed with you the Holly Library series published by the Mershon Company concerning another matter.

By utilizing PRICE'S CATALOGUE OF PAPER COVERED BOOKS ... (New York, 1905), I was able to piece together the Holly Library with the exception of, perhaps, thirty or so titles (the highest number in this series that I have ascertained is No. 255). Among the books listed in that series were six of the "Edna Winfield" stories cited by Mr. Walther. Here they are as listed in the Holly Library:

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 154. THE TEMPTATIONS OF A GREAT CITY. ) |                  |
| 155. THE GIRL FROM THE RANCH. )         |                  |
| 156. AN ACTRESS'S CRIME. )              |                  |
| 157. A STRUGGLE FOR HONOR. )            | By Edna Winfield |
| 158. BECAUSE OF HER LOVE FOR HIM. )     |                  |
| 159. LURED FROM HOME. )                 |                  |

Based on the fact that No. 165 of this series, THE AUTOCRAT OF THE BREAKFAST TABLE, by O. W. Holmes, was dated December 18, 1899, it is safe to assume that all of the above were issued in 1899.

Perhaps, more important for Mr. Walther is the fact that the Street & Smith citation THE LITTLE CUBAN REBEL first appeared in the *New York Weekly* under the title "Estella, the Little Cuban Rebel; or, A War Correspondent's Sweetheart," by Edna Winfield. The story appeared in Vol. 51, Nos. 17-28 (Feb. 15, to May 2, 1896), and later published as No. 68 of Street & Smith's Eagle Library series, issued June 13, 1898. If Mr. Walther could access the Street & Smith archives at Syracuse University,



perhaps the archival records would either reveal the true identity behind the "Edna Winfield" name or verify it as a Stratemeyer pseudonym.

Sincerely,  
Victor A. Berch

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm delighted with the top quality of the Merriwell bibliography. The comprehensive and painstaking research, the organization and presentation of the material—all in my view should make for an outstanding and lasting contribution to the Merriwell saga. I wish that Patten could have seen it. Congratulations, Eddie.

Frank Acker

\* \* \* \* \*

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